Vampyr

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Vampyr

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Summary

For a prompt on the kinkmeme:- "I mean come on, Hannibal Lecter already fits a bunch of vampire tropes.

Hannibal as a vampire, Will as whatever you want."

Chapter 1

i.

The night is too hot for easy dreams. Not that Will Graham's dreams have ever been easy. Ever since he was very young his thoughts have turned to strange and terrible things, Monsters in every curve and fall of a shadow, under beds and in closets, long before he came to know the faces of the real monsters of the world. Horrid flights of fancy, of what if what if what if. What if alligators came into their house late one night and ate them all up? What if one stormy day he was struck by lightning walking home from school? What if his parents were not his real parents but something else wearing their skins? Then as he aged the fancies became less fanciful. What if he was kidnapped, what if someone was lurking in alleys and backstreets and strangers' cars to kill him, or to do something worse (a vague and nebulous threat, poorly understood)? Sights seen on news and films reflected back in dark hours. In trying to sweep away nightmares with knowledge he only made things worse. He began to *understand*.

Fear breeds fear. Fear of the world, fear of himself. Adrenaline in overdrive, making his heart thrum heavy and uncomfortable, soaking his skin and sheets in sweat, muscles twitching and ready for flight or fight. Constant and unbearable. His sleep is disordered, feverish, falling from one terror to the next. He props open the window but there is no breeze to stir and cool the air. The dogs pant in their slumber. Even the towels he spreads rub wetly against over-sensitive skin.

His thoughts alternate between sluggish and hurried, sometimes fixating in horrid, obsessive detail, or pressing on one after the other in a flood of images. The faces of the dead girls; the pseudo-Shrike's mockery of art in the field, the pale, oddly intense psychiatrist Lecter in Crawford's office. The scent of dead flesh not yet rotted. The odd spice of Lecter's cologne.

He shifts, rolls to face the window. He cannot be sure whether or not he dreams, transitions not always obvious, often subtle and silent on nights like these. Mist seems to stream over the sill, falling in a heavy curtain. It rolls and rolls and fills the room. Oddly mesmerised, Will watches it lick its tendrils up towards him. On and on it goes, seeming without end, calmer, at least, than most of his visions have been of late. It is cool and sweet against his fevered skin, and he allows himself to be lulled by it. To drift in a comfortable place.

"Ah, my good Will, having trouble sleeping?" The voice is close enough to his ear that there should be breath against his cheek, but there is nothing. He pushes upright, but all is fog, layered and silent, waiting, hiding the outlines of his room. "Such a wonderfully active mind – a pity it weighs on you so heavily."

Familiar, that voice. The careful, measured sounds of that distinctive accent. He knows it, but why his mind has conjured up Hannibal Lecter, why it has chosen him for its focus, is less clear. A brief meeting, memorable for the unpleasant delving at his psyche, but that is all. That is all.

“I am sure you are aware of what a rare individual you are,” Lecter tells him. “To be able to look into the darkness and understand it, yet still return from its embrace.”

Is this some strange exercise in self-confidence? Will wonders. Does some small part of him yearn to be seen and judged worthy, rather than the monster built of reflected sympathies that truly lurks at the heart of him. More puerile than he expected of his own subconscious.

He sits up and the mist coils around his bare chest, bare arms. Lingers along his spine as something near physical. In the shadows are a thousand shapes, a thousand mockeries of monsters. Still he waits for one of them to move, for that is the way of his dreams; knowing that the fear must come, that the face of the abyss will make manifest the horrors of the waking world he has absorbed.

Thus he is not surprised when the mist becomes solid, when the shape of a man becomes heavy and certain, kneeling upon the bed. Hannibal Lecter watches him with a predator’s gaze, intense and heated with some passion that captivates and cannot be denied. Will stares, making unfamiliar and unpleasant contact, into eyes the red of bright, fresh blood, eyes that trap him, pinion him. Hypnotic. He cannot breathe.

“I thought carefully about what to do with you after we met,” he says. “what games we might play as the weeks and months passed. But... simplicity has its own value. The obvious path can be the most satisfying.”

Will’s throat is dry. His voice is trapped. He cannot look away.

Hannibal inches forwards. “You are afraid of what you might become, and this is very wise of you. Your potential is too great to be wasted. So I have decided to give you a gift.” He is very close now; bare inches, and still Will cannot move, cannot drop his eyes from that frightful gaze that fills the world in front of him. He feels feverish, unsteady, wild. His skin is flushed in anticipation of... what? He is afraid as the hare is afraid in the shadow of an eagle.

“I promise it will only hurt for a little while.”

The eyes are gone. Pain blooms in his throat. Will screams, or tries too, for it disappears and is swallowed by the heavy air of the night and the languid pleasure that is seeping through his veins. His body is without strength, limp. He drifts.

The dreams of the night before are faded in morning’s light. Will showers briefly, brushes his teeth and reflects on how pale his skin seems, washed out and anaemic. Too long with sleep so constantly disturbed, but it has been so all his life. Insomnia and nightmares are not banished merely by wishing it so.

His thoughts are disturbed by the knock at the door. Though the sky is cloudy his eyes are not yet adjusted and so he must squint to see who might be calling at so early an hour. It is... uncomfortable to realise it is the very man who haunted his dreams last night, whose shadow made him feel so very unlike himself.

It would be dishonest to deny the slight thrill of sexual attraction at the sight of him and so he does not, as unfamiliar as it might be. There is a sense of easy control to Lecter that he envies. His own is intangible and unsteady. There is a magnetism to the man too, harder to quantify. Will stands aside to let him in, a nod his invitation.

Then there is food, and conversation, and an easy truce. Lecter's eyes are simple unthreatening brown. Will wonders from where his ever-active imagination plucked the images of his sleep. Or is it simply the idea of his own sexuality (so uncommonly does it rear its head) that frightened him?

He puts it from his mind. There is work to be done.

Chapter 2

ii.

The last time Will had worked in the field the murders he had seen had been banal things for the most part. Easy motivations that took barely any thought to unravel, that fired off oft-used neurons in his brain, familiar pathways. They had made for uneasy dreams, fearful nights, but he had been able to bear them, just about. He had been used to them, to the feel of them, little different to the terrors of childhood made more mature. It had not been to quieten things in his head that he had left for a teaching post, but more because he was not able to do violence when need be. Not able to pull the trigger of his weapon. That would have made him too much like *them*.

Not so now, with Hobbs' blood staining his hands.

These murders are different. Jack is not using him for the everyday – if things were that simple he would have been content to leave him in his Quantico retirement. These are the strange, the weird, the uncanny. First cannibalistic affection paired with mocking, copy-cat kabuki theatre, now mushrooms grown on the not-yet-dead in some macabre attempt at forging connection. They are unique. They stretch his mental muscles, force him to think harder and look deeper. They call up uncanny connections and inferences in the night's darkness, worse than ever before.

Will feels himself stretching out, sees himself pale and worn-out in the mirror each morning. As accustomed as he is to bad dreams, they had settled somewhat in his time teaching, gradually leeching away colour and terror with familiarity as the permutations of even *his* imagination were worn thin. Not so now. The material his sub-conscious has to work with is both florid and lurid, and yet on those occasions when it makes itself manifest in the light of day it is harder to tell from reality than the banal ever was.

He has had that dream of fog again, several times. Of Hannibal – of Dr Lecter, for he would rather keep their relationship professional no matter what his id would prefer – with dark, red eyes and sharp teeth pressed to his throat, lapping blood. That it is so fanciful is not so odd; the drama of the everyday tends to multiply in sleep. He suspects the fog is symbolic of the lack of clarity that surrounds their relationship. Therapist, psychiatrist, and something on the way to a friend and confidant... He does not quite know where he stands with the man.

Even without his unsettling, sexualised fantasies of Dr Lecter taken into account, he is far from fine. The ghost of Hobbs haunts him, seen in dreams of firing ranges and in the graves of murder victims – some of whom are not entirely dead. That would have been enough to unsettle anyone, but that does not make him feel much better about his mental health. His hallucination of the Shrike happened before that.

Whether it is lack of sleep or the demands of this job, Will often feels light headed, has to pause and take stock of himself in fear of fainting. That would do nothing for his image. Too many think him fragile and damaged already without adding more evidence to the pile. Food

helps, but he has always tended to forget meals, too easily distracted to pay much mind to hunger. Perhaps that is part of the problem. To a certain amount of his discomfort it is Hannibal who has been helping in this arena, bringing him more little Tupperware boxes of home-cooked food at each of their sessions, too delicious to pass up. Perhaps the man has noticed his paleness. If Will had more confidence in the medical profession in general he might consider going for blood tests, but he would rather soldier on until the choice is taken from him.

The day before he gets the call from Jack about their lead on Eldon Stammets, he is woken from shallow and fragile sleep, haunted by the uncertain impression of Hannibal's sharp-toothed smile, by the barking of his dogs, insistent and oddly frantic. He wipes the grit of sleep from his eyes and goes down to see what has disturbed them. In general they are friendly enough in temperament when it comes to visitors, once they are accustomed to Will's colleagues. He's not sure who else it could be. The road is clearly marked as private property; only a very lost stranger could drive up it by accident.

He's expecting the dogs to leap out the door as soon as he opens it, but they cluster on the porch, whining and growling alternately at a spot on the edge of the woods that encircle the house. He stares into the gloom. The sun is not yet above the horizon.

Something moves. A massive black wolf steps out into the open, looking right at him. It is sleek and powerful and its eyes seem to shine red. Its tongue licks out, a startling stripe of pink. He has never seen a wolf before, but this one appears far larger than it has any right to be. There are said to be wolves in Virginia, or at least coyotes with a lot of wolf blood in them, but looking like this, this close to a residential area?

He doesn't move, doesn't break eye contact. It's easier with animals. Less to see, less to be judged by. Eventually the wolf turns and trots back into the trees, soon swallowed up by shadows and darkness. Will lets out breath he hadn't realised he was holding. There is a tense kind of awe nestled in his breast, the kind that always comes from seeing some aspect of wild nature up close. A normal human emotion. That's what he tells himself.

Later, much later, with the Stammets case concluded, he is back in Dr Lecter's office speaking of the blood on his hands. Hobbs still weighs on his thoughts, a man dead because of his own actions, a life that he took, that he *chose* to take. In the moment perhaps, with the heat of strong emotions and no rational thought, but that does not change the consequences. Does not change the way he felt when he did it. Righteous. Powerful. Desperate and then, for one shining moment, glorious and triumphant – until he looked down and saw the blood pumping from Abigail Hobbs' neck.

Shooting Eldon Stammets had not felt the same, and for that he is grateful. At least until Dr Lecter points out that he did not kill Stammets, and thus the two situations cannot be truly compared.

"I thought about it," he confesses. "I'm still not entirely sure that wasn't my intention pulling the trigger."

“If your intention was to kill him it’s because you understand why he did the things he did,” Hannibal tells him. “It’s beautiful in its own way. Giving voice to the unmentionable.”

Will does not find it particularly beautiful. There are too many ugly thoughts inside his head. Any yet Hannibal’s voice is oddly hypnotic. Easy to listen to, easy to fall under its spell, elegant with the exoticism of his accent, soft-spoken as the man himself who seems to always stand at the edges of things, watching. Easy to let him be Will’s paddle, a role he never though he would let another person fill. Easy to trust this man. He hopes it is not just down to the warm current of sexual attraction that lies quietly in his hindbrain every time they are in the same room. Will would hate for his higher faculties to be distracted by the whims of hormones.

“Did you really feel so bad because killing him felt so good?” Hannibal asks, with an intensity and odd gleam in his eyes that Will, for all his empathy, finds hard to interpret. Although there is a wide space between their chairs, they suddenly seem very close. He cannot break their gaze, their hypnotic connection. His confession feels pulled out of him.

“I liked killing Hobbs.” He’s barely even aware of the next words coming out of Hannibal’s mouth, or of his own answers. He is drawn in. He feels as though he is falling, drowning. Darkness gathers around his peripheral vision, his world narrows to those pupils black as the sea at night, and irises red as blood. Red? He is no longer entirely sure that he is not dreaming.

“Oh Will,” Hannibal says, sounding oddly fond. “You have no idea how tempting you are.”

He can’t even blink, much less find the energy to speak. Some far-off part of him is vaguely aware that he is hard, but he cannot even be embarrassed. Hannibal seems closer than ever, as though Will could reach out and touch him if he could only just raise his arm.

“I have done my best to wait, sweet Will. To... savour you, like a fine wine.” There is a hand on his chin, tilting it upwards. Slowly, his eyelids slide shut, but he is no less paralysed. His breath comes fast and sharp. His heart is beating wildly. “It might be a little hasty, but I have decided not to wait any longer.”

There’s a quick moment of pain, blossoming after the needle-pressure that slides through skin and fascia down to the great vessels of his neck, but as the blood gushes forth it fades and he drifts, drifts and slips away. Nothing makes sense, but his mind is not functioning, cannot puzzle it out. He feels limp and boneless, slack with cotton-soft pleasure.

Before he loses consciousness entirely, he feels something warm and wet against his lips, tricking into his mouth, down his throat. Then he is gone.

Chapter 3

iii.

When he wakes up he is ravenously, *viciously*, thirsty. His throat is on fire; it spasms and closes up with a sticky, inflamed aridity, rubbing and rough and harsh as sandpaper. He is lying on his back on something soft and when he starts to open his eyes light lances them, forcing them to slits. He twists, trying to rise, the world a wavering haze of the not-quite-seen. Though the pain is eclipsed by the feeling of his parched mouth, he is dimly aware that the rest of him is weak and aching too, muscles burning with a familiar sensation akin to that felt the day after heavy exercise. He tips, and slides off the couch he was lying on, hitting the floor on hands and knees.

“Careful Will,” someone says, as strong hands find his arms and steady him. Hannibal. His brain fights for the confused memories of... however long ago... but everything is fuzzy, for the moment a fading dream in the light of day (although his dreams are more often unpleasant enough to sink in, rather than being comfortingly forgotten).

“Water,” Will croaks, forcing the word out.

Hannibal chuckles, and it makes Will tense, suddenly uneasy. He doesn’t see the humour in this situation, and it makes him suspect he’s being made fun of. “Water will not help with this thirst. Don’t worry Will; I have just the thing.”

He is helped to his feet. He feels feeble, unsteady. His head pounds, the light assaults his eyes and he can see nothing. Noises seem magnified out of all proportion. The scrape of their shoes against the carpet. The soft sounds of cloth shifting with movement. A heartbeat that he would say was his own except that some trick of echolocation seems to place outside in the waiting room. He feels cold, chilled. He must be ill. Some infection, a faint, now hallucinations made worse by his deranged systems... Every part of him is off balance.

“Here we are,” Hannibal says, as though talking to a frightened animal. Will can hardly blame him. In this state, blinded, physically fragile, he can hardly avoid being stressed, afraid, on edge. The door opens, the handle clicks loudly as it turns. A scent hits his nose, utterly unfamiliar and utterly delicious, so that he cannot help but take in deep, sharp sniffs, like a dog, like a bloodhound. His mouth waters, and the liquid slides down his throat like acid. His teeth feel strange, unfamiliar. His jaws hurt.

“Please,” someone says, begs, “please... just let me go. Whatever you want, I’ll do it, I swear, and I won’t tell anyone, just *please*.”

Will barely registers it. It is darker in here, lit only from the office they just left, and his eyes can finally open. Open and narrow in on their target. The young man tied securely to one of the chairs, the side of his head bleeding from some blow. Will’s tongue slips out to lick his lips without being quite aware of it. That smell... it fills the air, driving him quite out of his mind. He can’t think about anything else. Can’t question what in the hell is going on here,

what this entirely *wrong* set-up means. Hannibal's hand is a constant pressure at the small of his back. He takes an unconscious step forward.

Will's mouth has dropped open, wet with saliva but entirely unquenched. There is a sharp pain in his teeth that calls up a sudden flash of childhood, of milk teeth ready to fall yet still tethered by tender flesh. He is yearning for something he does not truly understand. As though hypnotised, he moves forward, finding himself oddly graceful despite the weakness in his muscles. Everything is dreamlike. All he knows is that he *wants*, desperately, and the thirst in his throat is agony.

He bends his head, following strange and alien instincts, licks uncertainly at the crusted runnel of blood at the man's temple. Flavour explodes in his mouth, history written in red cells and plasma. Ghosts of old meals and emotions. He follows the trail lower, towards the thump off a deafening heartbeat, fluttering fast with fear. A pulse throbs in the man's neck.

In the moment he does not control his own actions. It is as though something else, some outlandish predatory creature, has taken over his muscles and bones and moves him on. Some dim and muddled part of him is drawing back in horror, but he must go on. He bites down, and slices through skin and muscle with startling ease. The red flood rushes forth and he suckles at the wound like a newborn child.

It soothes his throat like honey, it warms his stomach like strong alcohol, it makes him flush and heat and feel strong. His hands come up to fasten on shoulder and hair, tilting the man's head back, baring his throat further. It's messy. In his eagerness he tears as though trying to burrow his way inside flesh, lets arterial spurts escape and paint his chest and neck, slower venous blood flowing down to stain the stranger's shirt and colour his own mouth with red. He manages to latch on to those pressured carotid jets for the last few, weakening beats of the man's heart before it gives out, gushing into his mouth without effort.

The thirst was great; the man is dead in minutes.

Satiated, the haze of overwhelming thirst is lifted. Will stumbles back, pushes himself away from the corpse in horror. He falls onto the carpet, staring up at the ruin of a throat, worried and lacerated as though a wild animal has been at it. He feels hot and cold at turns and he wants to vomit, but there is no real nausea to accompany the mental reflex. He feels as though he should be hyperventilating, but he is not even aware that he is breathing at all. He whimpers.

Hannibal crouches down in front of him. He is smiling, and his teeth are not... are not normal. Fangs, Will thinks, and cannot look away. His hand rises as if of its own volition to his own mouth, and his fingers meet something long and sharp. The skin of his index finger parts, and wells with borrowed blood. He knows legends and fantasy well enough. He knows what these things mean.

"This isn't possible," he says, his voice weak and futile even to his own ears. His eyes dart up to meet Hannibal's, and they are red, red, red. "None of this can be real. I'm just dreaming."

"Does this truly feel like a dream to you Will?" Hannibal asks, and sounds as though he really does want to know.

He would very much like to believe that it is. Just some ardent fancy, some looming, multiplied nightmare echoing all those of the past nights, a terrified, taboo manifestation of distorted sexuality drawing from society's shared id and nothing more. Yet even at their most real none of the horrors of his nights have been able to match *this*. Dreams can never really get pain right, and this has been painful in the extreme. Blood is drying, crusty and itching, on his lips and chin.

"No," he says finally, no more than a whisper. "No but... vampires don't *exist*."

"Many things exist that cannot be adequately explained by modern science," Hannibal tells him. "What we are is merely one of those things."

"We?" Will asks, sharp and mocking. "We? You did this to me. You made me into this... *monster*."

"You were taking too long in your mortal form," Hannibal replies, and Will nearly chokes on his own anger.

"What does that even *mean*?" he demands. "I *trusted* you. Was any of that even real, or just some kind of hypnotism? Did you *make* me think of you as a friend?"

"I did nothing to you but drink," Hannibal says softly. He is still crouching, still as a waiting predator. The awkward position does not seem to bother him at all. "Even now you do not see your own potential. When Jack first came to me, he aroused my interest, but it was not until I met you that I understood the truly wonderful killer that you might become."

The noise that forces its way out of his throat is nearly a sob. "No. No. You don't understand, I've tried so hard to keep myself separate, and now you've torn everything down, you've made me just like *them*. I... I just murdered someone. I..."

"Yes," Hannibal says, as implacable as ice. "And you should not be afraid of how good that felt. You and I are much alike Will. We are not the common animals that make up the majority of humanity. You are a predator who has tried to pretend he is anything but. I have merely shown you the truth, and it is up to you to accept it."

"How could I have missed what you are?" Will spits, baring his fangs in an unconscious gesture of rage. The tips of his fingers tingle with pins and needles; his nails are growing out into claws. He stares down at them, but the reaction is out of his control. All he does is score his own skin. His mind feels as though it has shattered into a hundred pieces, a broken mirror that has failed to show this man's true reflection. The thought makes him want to laugh. Of course. Vampires have no reflections.

"Even you are not without your blind spots, Will. It was easy to slip inside them, once I had a chance to see you at work."

"But now I know," Will says, fierce with hatred. "Am I supposed to be, what, bound to you now? What's to stop me leaving, right now?"

“You are welcome to try,” Hannibal says mildly. He has not stopped smiling, not once. He seems almost fond, amused at Will’s outburst of anger as one would be at a much loved child having a half-way charming tantrum. “The sun will rise in an hour. You might just be able to return to your home in that time, provided you are not caught in traffic. I would not think it worth the risk.”

“It doesn’t seem to bother you.”

“I am considerably older than you, Will. With time, you will be able to walk in daylight once again, but not soon.”

Will would very much like to cry with the injustice of it all, but he would feel foolish and weak. Of course it’s not fair. The world isn’t fair. Still, of all the terrible fates his imagination has summoned for him over the years, this was not one of them. “How old are you anyway?”

“I became what I am now in 1943,” Hannibal replies. “It was not as pleasant an experience as I tried to make it for you. We shall have no secrets between us now Will. We are bound together by blood. I have responsibilities towards you, and I intend to see that they are met.”

“So I’m your prisoner, but you’re going to treat me nicely?”

“You’re *not* my prisoner Will,” Hannibal corrects him. “You are free to leave whenever you like, but it would not be wise to do so when you do not yet know your new strengths or weaknesses.”

Will knows when he is beaten. Hannibal is right; he knows nothing of this monster he has become. All he wants is to go home to his house and his dogs, curl up with them and wish that reality would recede, time wind back, but he doubts there is any cure for what he is, or that Hannibal would tell him if there was. And what would happen when that terrible thirst came on him again? It had taken him over utterly; he could not have stopped if he had wanted to. At least Hannibal knew how to control it, or he would himself be dead, all those times in the night that he had come to him and drunk from him. He knows now that those were no dreams.

This is a trap, a curse, a deep, slick-sided pit with no way up and out. He bows his head, feeling tears seeping in a slow trickle down his cheeks. They blur his vision red and when he wipes them away he sees that they are blood.

Strong hands wrap around his head, lifting it up. Hannibal is too close; he tries to jerk away but his grip is iron. “Come Will. I know it is much to adapt to. But you will begin to appreciate my gift in time.” Will closes his eyes, not wanting to look at this kind-faced abomination. He regrets it when he feels something cool and wet on his skin. Hannibal is licking the splattered blood from him, cleaning him careful inch by careful inch, a tiger cleaning its cub.

He shudders, and thinks longingly of the sun. Even if it hurt, even if he felt every part of him burn, surely it would be better than this.

He knows he won't do it though. He's not that strong. It might take time, but he can see that it's inevitable.

He will become the monster Hannibal has made him.

Fin.

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